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MILITARY MANPOWER AND EQUIPMENT IN NORTH VIETNAM

Annex to SNIE 53-68

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Manpower Availability in North Vietnam

1. The availability of manpower during the next 18 months will probably not be a constraint on North Vietnam's contribution to the war effort in the South. North Vietnam has an estimated 2.8 million males in the military-age group 17 to 35 of which it is believed that 55 percent would be physically fit for military service. Out of the 1.5 million males fit for military service there are an estimated 475,000 presently in the armed forces. Thus, a theoretical reservoir of about 1,000,000 males are available for military service. These are presently occupied in agriculture, industry, construction, transportation, and education and include personnel in the militia and those indirectly involved in air and civil defense. The extent to which the regime draws the remaining civilian males into military service depends on the priority given war requirements in the South as opposed to requirements of the economy and defense in the North. It is estimated that at least 500,000 males can be diverted from the civilian labor force to military duties without detriment to the civilian economy or to the North's capability to support the war in the South.

2. During the next 18 months it is estimated that about 300,000 North Vietnamese males will reach the age of 17 and that about 180,000 of these will be physically fit for military service. We believe that the build up in the North Vietnamese armed forces from about 240,000

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in 1965 to the present estimated 475,000 and the provision of fillers for units in the South was accomplished primarily by recruiting the physically fit males reaching draft age each year. Assuming that the build up in North Vietnamese force levels is completed, the primary requirement for additional forces is now for infiltration to the South.

3. About 50,000 additional forces could be sent South if the need arose by drawing down the number of ground forces within North Vietnam. Of the total military establishment, North Vietnam has retained about 360,000 within North Vietnamese borders for logistical support, coast and air defense, defense against a possible allied invasion, administration and training. We estimate that 310,000 of the forces presently in country would be retained for North Vietnam's defenses, support and training activities.

Equipment Availability

4. There is no foreseeable limitation on force levels due to lack of equipment in the next 18 months. The capability of North Vietnam to equip and support military units at home and out of country is entirely dependent on aid from other Communist countries. Thus far Communist countries have been willing to keep North Vietnam supplied with the required military goods to develop and sustain defenses in the North and to equip forces to counter US escalation in the South. Economic goods also have been supplied to maintain transport, some industries and civilian consumption. Since the initiation of the US bombing program

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and the increased commitment of US forces in South Vietnam the amount of military aid delivered to North Vietnam by other Communist countries has increased steeply from a total of only \$140 million during 1954-64 to about \$1,400 million during 1965-67. Economic aid has also increased from an average of about \$90 million annually before the bombing to about \$340 million in 1967.

5. An increasing volume of arms and ammunition imported by North Vietnam has been transported along the infiltration trails to South Vietnam, significantly increasing Communist firepower in the South over the last year. Greater numbers of standard Soviet or Chicom weapons such as the 7.62 mm new family of weapons* have been appearing in South Vietnam in recent months. In addition to the new family of weapons, grenade launchers, mortars, rockets and artillery are appearing in increasing quantities. Although weapons and ordnance facilities have been established by the Communists in South Vietnam, the major logistical requirement for standardized arms and ammunition must be met by sources outside. It is estimated that presently 85 percent of small arms and ammunition, and almost all of the mortars, rockets, and artillery ammunition used by Communist forces in South Vietnam are imported. The bulk of weapons and ammunition are infiltrated over the Laotian infiltration corridor, supplemented by sea infiltration and the smuggling of small

* The new family consists of the Soviet (or North Korean and Chinese copies) AK-47 assault rifle, SKS carbine, and RPD light machine gun.

quantities of arms and ammunition from Cambodia. The introduction of new weapons to replace the old indicates an expectation that resupply can be continued.

6. The Communist countries have indicated their willingness to continue to support the war in Vietnam. In the fall of 1967 all Communist countries except Yugoslavia signed trade and aid agreements with North Vietnam. More than half of the agreements provided for military assistance in 1968. In previous years little mention has been made of military assistance to North Vietnam and it is believed that through 1967 the USSR and Communist China supplied most of the military equipment, the East European countries providing only token amounts. North Vietnam probably will continue to receive needed amounts of military and economic aid. The burdens placed on the Communist donor countries are not significantly large and the USSR and China could continue indefinitely supplying equipment to North Vietnam at present or higher levels. It is also probable that more advanced weapons systems would be sent to North Vietnam as required to match US escalation.